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## Ask for officer's ID

Chief speaks to rash  
of pony cop complaints.  
Page 3

## Noted artist mourned

Welland park dedicated  
to Rod Dowling's work.  
Page 18

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## Mary Poppins pops into Port

MICHELLE ALLENBERG /  
POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Mary Poppins surprises  
Mr. and Mrs. Banks and the  
housekeeping staff during  
an opening scene of Mary  
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# Communications technology needed for development

**ALLAN BENNER**  
Postmedia Network

At a time when Internet communication is becoming increasingly necessary, communities without it are being left behind — especially when it comes to economic development.

Niagara Region chief information officer Stuart Hendrie was at Welland last Friday as part of an initiative working to change that.

Hendrie was at the Welland Civic Square running the first in a series of Niagara workshops to discuss the Southwest Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) initiative, a project launched by the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus to build a high speed fibre optic network that will extend services to the rural areas that are not being served by telecommunications companies.

But extending high speed internet access to every home and business in the rural areas of South Western Ontario, including Niagara, won't be cheap.

"That's probably like \$4- or \$6-billion," Hendrie said.

But to start, he said the goals are much more modest.

Multiple levels of government are being asked to pitch in, along with private industries, to put together about \$287-million investment to get the project underway.

Hendrie said the organization will be asking the provincial and federal governments to pitch in \$84-million each on the project, while municipalities will be asked for \$18-million, and private business would be asked for \$80.4-million.

To extend high speed service to rural communities throughout Niagara, Hen-



Regis Sauviner from ERP Connex discusses the Southwest Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) initiative at a Niagara Region workshop last week in Welland.

drie estimated it would cost as much as \$35-million. But as part of the SWIFT initiative, the Niagara Region's costs would likely be \$2- to \$3-million.

"It makes it doable," he said. "I think that's the exciting part of it, it is doable."

Regional Chairman Alan Caslin said being part of SWIFT is one of several initiatives underway in Niagara to "try and create an environment for prosperity, for business, to want to locate in Niagara."

"This isn't an option for us in getting fibre optics into the communities that don't have it now. It's a baseline neces-

sity," he said.

"If we truly are focused on creating an environment for economic prosperity in Niagara, then we have to put skin in the game."

Hendrie said about 35 people participated in the workshop in Welland, including a few people from rural parts of Niagara as well as people in the telecommunications industry.

Additional workshops are being organized in other parts of the region, including the rural communities most affected by the initiative.

But Hendrie said it's ironic that the problem they're working to resolve is hampering their efforts to resolve it.

For instance, they're trying to organize and promote workshops in rural communities like Wainfleet and West Lincoln. But in this case using social media websites to promote those meetings is not an option.

"We're not going to get to the people in Wainfleet because they're not connected," he said. "It's interesting for our communications folks because they're trying to think of different ways to get that message out to people when normally they just default to social media."

"And we have not much," he said.

Despite the bad news, Meyer said it's encouraging to see the interest in the project.

"It's really good to see the City of Welland take action on it, because it's been an extremely long time that we've been working on it," he said.

Members of MYAC have spent years fundraising, lobbying and researching the

[allan.benner@sunmedia.ca](mailto:allan.benner@sunmedia.ca)

## No federal funding for skate park

**ALLAN BENNER**  
Postmedia Network

Just as excitement was building among Welland's youth for a new skate park were short-lived.

Although Welland city council was willing to pitch in to build a skate park this year, adding \$433,000 to the city's budget to help pay for it, the municipality learned earlier this month its application for \$216,667 in federal Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program funding was denied.

"It's disappointing," said Zach Meyer, Mayor's Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) president. "It's really disappointing that we didn't get the grant."

The 17-year-old Notre Dame student said he was informed Friday that the funding was not approved after an e-mail from Canada 150 was forwarded to him.

The email, he said, offered no explanation about why it was denied other than that there were numerous applications for the \$1.5 million announced last spring.

Meyer visited the aging facility Wednesday, looking at its plywood ramps covered in graffiti and the concrete floor marred with cracks.

"It's horrible," he said. "It's health and safety issue. Look at the ramps, they're in such bad condition, and the concrete."

Meanwhile, he said neighbouring communities, including Pelham, Niagara Falls, St. Catharines and Port Colborne, have "unbelievable" skate parks.

"And we have not much," he said.

Despite the bad news, Meyer said it's encouraging to see the interest in the project.

"It's really good to see the City of Welland take action on it, because it's been an extremely long time that we've been working on it," he said.

Members of MYAC have

spent years fundraising, lobbying and researching the creation of a new skate park to replace the facility behind the Welland arena. The city's youth managed to pitch in about \$3,000 themselves, through the annual Rock Hard Ride Hard event held each year in May.

Mayor Frank Campion said the city's \$433,000 contribution to the project remains included in the 2016 budget despite the loss of the federal funding.

"We had high hopes that we'd get the funding," Campion said. "We really did think the youth movement, think we were going to get something there. We're disappointed as well."

Although he said city staff had been getting "very favourable" indications about the application prior to being informed that the application was denied.

"I guess that just proves the point that nothing's a sure thing until you have it in your hand," Campion said.

Meyer said he hasn't given up hope that the remaining funds could be raised, "whether it's from community partners or sponsorships or other grants that we can start to look at."

But it would take many of running Rock Hard Ride Hard events to raise more than \$261,000 to cover the full about \$650,000 most of the project.

"I think now it has more momentum than it ever did, which is extremely positive for us," Meyer added. "We're really looking forward to it," he said. "I think the next step is finding out how we get the remainder of our budget to move forward."

Campion said he hasn't given up on the skate park either.

He said city staff will prepare a report on what to do with that \$433,000, and he expects that renewed plans for the skate park will be among the options that will be presented.

## Corb Lund with American Aquarium

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FEB 13

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FEB 17

## Jamie Adkins Circus INcognitus

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- THE TIMES (UK)



## Essential Collective Theatre POOR

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FEB 18 - 28



# Ask to see officer's ID: chief

DON FRASER  
Postmedia Network

Anyone who is driving and is stopped by a police officer can ask to see the officer's official ID.

Niagara Regional Police Chief Jeff McGuire reminded citizens of that last Friday in light of reports of three recent incidents in which a man impersonating a Niagara police officer pulled over drivers.

McGuire said his officers are professional and won't be offended by a request to prove identification.

Of the three incidents, two involve a man in an unmarked car using flashing police lights to pull over a female driver. In one case, a man approached a woman seated in a car in St. Catharines and identified himself as a police officer.

"Every officer is obligated to provide proper identification," McGuire said during his regular ChatWithTheChief online show broadcast from the Postmedia Network studio, and moderated by reporter Grant LaFleche.

Officers are required to carry a metal badge and a warrant card, or full photo ID.

"Our officers are properly trained. No officer should be offended to have to show their identification," McGuire said.

If a person is troubled by the



JULIE JOSKAM / POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Standard reporter Grant LaFleche chats with Chief Jeff McGuire of the Niagara Regional Police.

circumstances of being stopped, calling 911 is also an option, he said.

"Safety is the key to people being stopped," McGuire said. "I truly believe you're in an (urgent) situation, dial 911 and you'll know you are speaking to somebody in the police department right then and there."

The chief advises callers to tell a dispatcher where they are, what's happening, a description

of the vehicle and reason for concern. At the very least, it will confirm whether the traffic stop is legitimate.

"We are truly concerned about what's going on right now," McGuire said of the incidents. "And we're appealing to the public as to who this person(s) might be."

"It's a very dangerous practice ... they are committing a criminal offence. We don't want to

see this get worse than it already is."

McGuire also spoke to an incident on Queen Street in St. Catharines earlier this week, in which a homeless man had his string of shopping carts filled with cardboard and empty containers removed and dumped by city workers.

An NRP officer was on scene to maintain control.

Eventually, a caseworker

with Community Care of St. Catharines-Thorold arrived and helped further defuse the situation.

An NRP pilot project is underway in which a mental health worker goes on patrol with officers on certain shifts in the St. Catharines area. In this week's incident, a mental health person was not on duty.

McGuire said that worker is mostly assigned during the

afternoon or evening and has full access to helpful data on people of concern. "We try to identify through our analysis in the community as to what's the best time to use them," he said.

So far, the project — based on a similar one in Hamilton — appears to be a "big success."

For one, he said, it makes for better initial contact with the person in distress, he said.

"We have a mental health worker right there at the beginning (so we) can resolve a lot of things and get them to the hospital."

It's also easier to assess whether that person doesn't need to go to the hospital — something that can eat up huge police and professional resources.

The chief said it's also "better care for the patient and de-escalates situations."

Asked about the possibility of the worker ridealong becoming a 24-hour service, McGuire said "it all comes down to cost as well."

"But we may get to the point where we'll see if we can expand the hours and better analysis on who calls deployment to at what time and the location, so we can deploy them better."

If the pilot project is adopted as permanent, McGuire said he expects the NRP would try to roll it out across the region.

## Concrete slab still missing in homicide case

ALLAN BENNER  
Postmedia network

Seven months after launching a homicide investigation into the disappearance of 22-year-old Shawn Kapadia, Toronto police have no progress to report.

Last fall, Toronto police asked for the community's

help locating a concrete slab in the south Niagara area. Police believe the remains of the missing Mississauga man may be encased by it.

"There's no update at this time," Toronto Police Const. Caroline deKloet said last week.

"We are looking with anyone who may have information

to contact the Toronto Police homicide squad," she said.

Although there are no new developments at this time, deKloet said police hope keep the case in the public eye "so people don't forget about what had happened."

Kapadia was last seen leaving his home July 5, and police

suspected he was murdered the same day at a townhouse on Foundry Avenue.

The Toronto Police investigation shifted to a home on O'Reilly's Road in Wainfleet after Kapadia's car, a 2007 Pontiac G6, was found there.

Police said a yellow John Deere backhoe was seen at the Wainfleet home on Sat-

urday, July 11. And video surveillance cameras captured images of the backhoe heading east on Broadway Avenue in Wainfleet a day later. A large concrete block was in its bucket.

Although the backhoe was found near the QEW and Highway 420 in Niagara Falls, on July 23, the concrete block was not recovered.

Anyone with information is asked to Toronto homicide detectives at 416-808-7400, ext. 77412, Niagara Regional Police at 905-735-7811 ext. 3300, or Crime Stoppers at 416-222-TIPS.

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# Livestock losses in barn fires causing concern

**ALISON LANGLEY**  
Postmedia Network

Local fire departments are worried they'll be called on for fire safety inspections in light of a series of recent devastating fires resulted in massive loss of animal life and millions of dollars in property damage.

Four separate fires at Ontario barns in January claimed the lives of 56 horses, 500 goats, 30 cattle and approximately 2,000 pigs.

More than 80 dairy cows died following a barn fire Feb. 1.

"Given the delayed detection time, the large load of combustible fuels (hay and straw), and lack of available water, it puts the fire department in a deficit right from the start," said Ray Coplen, chief of the Fort Erie Fire Department.

"Anything a farmer can do to be proactive and ensure there are no sources of ignition will go a long way."

Local fire departments say barn owners can follow a few safety precautions to reduce the risk of a fire.

"You need to practice good housekeeping in barns," said Brian Dickson, chief of fire prevention with the Niagara Falls Fire Department. "You need to keep the barn clean and organized. That is crucial. And, absolutely no smoking."



Barn fires, like this one from 2014 in Wainfleet, have Niagara's firefighters worried.

that rule should be strictly followed."

He also recommends owners develop and practice an escape plan, similar to a home escape plan.

"Plan ahead," Dickson added. "Make sure there's a plan for what to do in the event of an emergency."

He also recommends owners consider investing in a wireless smoke alarm and using a smart phone app which will alert users to an emergency.

"The cost might cost a couple of hundred dollars but, compared to the price of saving a barn and the livestock, it's a small price to pay," Dickson said.

The office of the Ontario Fire Marshal estimates that barn fires represent an aver-

age annual cost of more than \$25 million in Ontario.

"These tragic incidents underscore the need for owners and operators to identify, and eliminate, potential fire risks on agricultural properties, including in their barns and sta-

bies," said Ontario Fire Marshal Ross Nichols.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs recently issued a list of "best practices" to follow to reduce the risk of barn fires.

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## BARN FIRE STATISTICS

2012: 136 fire incidents, \$16 million loss  
2013: 157 fire incidents, \$31.8 million loss  
2014: 150 fire incidents, \$28.4 million loss

### Fires at Ontario barns

Jan. 5: 43 Standardbred horses killed in a barn fire in Puslinch

Jan. 14: 13 Arabian horses killed in a barn fire in Mount Forest

Jan. 17: Barn fire near Delaware kills 500 goats and 30 cattle

Jan. 19: Barn fire in Parkhill kills nearly 2,000 pigs.

Feb. 1: Barn fire in Elgin County kills 85 dairy cows

### Best practices

■ Have a qualified

professional complete assessments of all farm buildings and have electrical equipment inspected yearly by a licensed contractor  
■ Keep the area around heat lamps clear of clutter or bedding materials and only use heat lamps with the CSA or UL label

■ Check exposed electrical equipment for corroded parts and repair damaged fixtures or equipment as soon as possible  
■ Avoid storing fuels and chemicals such as gasoline, cleaning fluids or solvents inside barns  
■ Keep a fire extinguisher on hand and make sure a reliable source of water is available and easily accessible by fire departments



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# Syrian family feels welcomed, respected in Canada

MICHELLE ALLENBERG  
Postmedia Network

It was a dream for Abdul Raman Musa Agha and his family to move to Canada, and on Jan. 24 that dream became a reality.

Agha's brother Belal Musa Agha and his wife and two children arrived in Canada on Jan. 1 from Lebanon. The two families, originally from Syria, have been eagerly waiting to reunite in Port Colborne.

Through a translator Abdul said he was very grateful to be reunited with Belal and everyone in Canada has been good.

When Belal and his family moved to Canada Abdul said it was hard because he didn't know when he would see his family again. Abdul's wife, Hoda Al Tamas, had given birth to a baby boy in November, so the family had to wait before travelling.

The two families fled Syria more than two years ago to relocate to Tripoli, Lebanon, due to the civil unrest in their home country.

When they were in Syria Abdul owned a business exchanging goods, including rice and sugar. When they moved to Lebanon he started his own bakery, but the family struggled to make money.

Abdul said it was difficult in



MICHELLE ALLENBERG/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Hoda Al Tamas, Abdul Raman Musa Agha and their four children baby boy Zayd Musa Agha, Omar Musa Agha, 7, and twins Hamza Musa Agha and Tala Musa Agha, 5.

Lebanon to succeed because of the high number of Syrians who were seeking refuge. There were so many Syrians that it affected

the job market.

In Syria Abdul said they weren't privileged to learn English, so he feels happy to be

learning English now. Abdul said his main concern is to master English as a second language teacher. Cromwell said he plans to meet with both families a couple times a week to add to

what they learn at the Welland

Heritage Council and Multicultural Centre.

Abdul said he is a very independent person who loves to work and provide for his family. Abdul said he has a lot of pride and would work doing anything to make sure his family was taken care of. Abdul and his family feel welcomed and accepted by the community and by the members of St. James and St. Brendan church who sponsored them.

In Lebanon Abdul said he felt discriminated against, but in Canada he is feeling respected again.

Abdul said when they first moved to Lebanon the people tried to help him and other Syrians. Eventually, due to the amount of people, they started to put Syrians in a category of "the Syrians." Everything bad that would happen would be because of the Syrians. Abdul said it became like a racial slant. Even though the cultures are similar, there was hatred.

Despite the stigma, Abdul said there were many Lebanese who did not discriminate. The family created many friends in Lebanon who loved and supported them.

It was difficult to say goodbye to their friends and family in Lebanon. Abdul said although it was hard to leave, he knew it was the best choice for his family.

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# 1.8 per cent tax hike proposed for Port Colborne

**FRANKI IKEMAN**  
Postmedia Network

Port Colborne city council passed its \$1.8 million budget at committee of the whole last week.

If approved at the council level, the budget proposed by staff will see an overall tax increase of 1.8 per cent, about \$51 for the average Port Colborne home.

That increase includes decreased tax rates from the region and an assumed no change in the education tax rates - the city hasn't received the final numbers.

Raising city taxes will

allow Port Colborne to put away between \$230,000 and \$300,000 (depending on the finalized education numbers) for the future build of the city's new operations centre.

"The reason being is that we have the new operations centre that we are going to be building between 2016 and 2017 - so basically we're going to be, in 2017 we'll be debenturing for the new operations centre in order to spread that debenture cost over a couple of years - we're starting this year to raise part of the funding for that," said director of com-

munity and corporate services Peter Senese.

Senese said the city is looking at spending just under \$2 million on capital projects.

Among those capital projects passed Monday were \$990,000 on road resurfacing, \$300,000 on

vehicle and equipment replacement, \$200,000 on the Roselawn Centre and \$100,000 on playground and outdoor gear replacement.

Council also debated and cut some staff recommendations from the original proposed budget - lowering the overall tax increase from

2 per cent to 1.8 per cent.

Council deferred funding to the tune of \$44,000 for two temporary winter workers, \$1,000 for a city staff and \$15,400 for a tourism service representative at Vale Health and Wellness Centre. Council also chose to phase in increased hours for part time Roselawn hox

office staff over two years, decreasing funding for 2016 from \$10,000 to \$5,000.

Senese said a final report will be presented to council at the March 21 meeting for council approval.

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Twitter: @FrankiKeman

“

The reason being is that we have the new operations centre that we are going to be building between 2016 and 2017 - so basically we're going to be, in 2017 we'll be debenturing for the new operations centre in order to spread that debenture cost over a couple of years we're starting this year to raise part of the funding for that.”

Director of community and corporate services Peter Senese

Port Colborne-Wainfleet Chamber of Commerce



Now Seeking Nominations!

It's time to celebrate those who make Port Colborne & Wainfleet great places to live and work! The Chamber is accepting nominations in the following categories:

Business of the Year

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Women in Business

Citizen of the Year

Youth Citizen of the Year

Junior Youth Citizen of the Year

Business Person of the Year

Community Leader

Volunteer of the Year

Employee of the Year

Community Service

Community Organization

Community Improvement

Community Project

Community Event

Community Program

Community Leadership

Community Spirit

Community Involvement

Community Contribution

Community Impact

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# Niagara and its pervasive identity crisis

CHARLES COINTH

Special to Postmedia Network

By all indications, Niagara is on the cusp of a new era. On the positive side of this transformation is the emergence of core industries that can serve as agents of coordinated action. Think of post-secondary actors like Brock's BioLink and Niagara College's nTackOff project. Imagine community conduits like Niagara Connects institutionalizing forums of knowledge exchange. Add to this the growing prospects of advanced manufacturing and green technology sectors in the region. I can go on.

On the negative side of this crossroads, however, is the persistence of youth outmigration, the threatening spectre of

a quiet brain drain, a stubborn prevalence of poverty and inequality, and the existential crisis of a region still struggling to find its identity. If this is the latter, however, there will be such a sense of shared social and economic destiny that the leadership will be sufficiently motivated to align their institutions for core functions like an integrated infrastructure and public transit as well as pooling resources to support emerging industries and combat poverty in the region.

Thankfully, the region recognizes this fact. Historical records indicate that Niagara has long been pondering and debating the question about its own identity: is it just a geographic territory consisting of 12 municipalities, each minding their own business; or is it a region that is more than the sum of its parts. If it is the former, then each municipality can, as much

as possible, politely coexist with their neighbours while struggling to keep their heads above the swelling waters of global economic tide. If it is the latter, however, there will be such a sense of shared social and economic destiny that the leadership will be sufficiently motivated to align their institutions for core functions like an integrated infrastructure and public transit as well as pooling resources to support emerging industries and combat poverty in the region.

The conversation about Niagara reconfiguring its institutions started many decades ago. Major studies commissioned by the region have helped illuminate the options but politics have not allowed for a concerted resolution.

One of these studies was led by Woods Gordon who issued a report in 1979, co-facilitated by the Province of Ontario and the Regional Municipality of Niagara. The purpose of this study was to formulate an action plan in response to the region's economic decline. Among Woods Gordon's many observa-

tions was a fairly straightforward recommendation to integrate the region's economic assets through a strong and legitimate body — a regional economic development commission.

An interesting part of the report was its audacity to recommend that existing development offices in St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Welland and Fort Erie be phased out after one year. Policies prevailed over reason. Leaders from these four cities quickly marshalled a range of lethal arguments and killed the report to its unimpressive grave.

But another attempt was made to save the region. Turben Dreyes issued a second report in 1989, titled "Economic Development in the Niagara Region." The report gripped about the well-known institutional deficiencies, including the lack of formal divisions of function and the absence of clear statutory provisions stipulating policies and procedures for coordinating across the region and its constituent parts.

Never tired of commissioning new studies, Niagara Region hired the Randolph Group

which released another report in 2010. The report lamented the same woes: the need to clarify roles and responsibilities between the region and constituent functions, and to build cooperation and trust among the leadership. After reviewing the report's diagnostics, the region decided to establish a task force to conduct a further study.

The economic development task force (EDTF) was launched in March 2011 to study Niagara's strengths and opportunities for development over the next decade. Polite press releases over reason. Leaders from the region's four cities quickly marshalled a range of lethal arguments and killed the report to its unimpressive grave.

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Never tired of commissioning new studies, Niagara Region hired the Randolph Group

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The world-famous basketball showboats the Harlem Globetrotters will be dribbling their way to the Meridian Centre in April.

The team — famous for its crazy trick shots and comedy routines for the past 90 years — will play in St. Catharines on April 16 at 7 p.m., part of their 90th anniversary tour.

The team is expected to include Big Easy Lofton, Ant Atkinson, Hi-Lite Bruton, Cheese Chisholm and female stars TNT Maddox and Sweet J Ekwomadu. After the game the Globetrotters stars will sign autographs and take photos with the fans.

Tickets start at \$20 and will go on sale Feb. 15 at 10 a.m. at harlemglobetrotters.com, ticketmaster.ca or by phone 1-855-985-3000 or the Meridian box office on Feb. 16.

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Tues. (if needed) Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup> 8pm

Away Games (Komoka)

Sat. Feb. 20 8pm

Mon. Feb. 22 1:30pm



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# Mary Poppins flying into town

**MICHELLE ALLENBERG**  
Postmedia Network

The beloved Mary Poppins will take flight this weekend in a magical performance presented by Port Colborne Operatic Society.

Director Barry Snider said he was excited to learn rights to present the Mary Poppins script by Disney and Cameron Mackintosh had become available and jumped on the opportunity.

Snider said operatic society members agreed it was only worth doing the play if they could make Mary Poppins fly. With the help of the company Flying Fol and a harness, Poppins will soar above the stage.

"There have been so many countless hours and many dance rehearsals. It's an extremely complex show," Snider said.

The play was written for Broadway and has elements from the movie and books. Snider said audiences will enjoy some favourites from the movie, but also a few new songs. There are added scenes from the books, so people who have seen the movie will enjoy a new experience.

"It's a nice bridge between the movie and the novels," said Emma Bonin, who plays Poppins.

Bonin does a fair bit of flying in the play. She said now that she's been trained with the harness she isn't scared or nervous to fly.

"I'm in good hands," Bonin said.

For Bonin, playing the iconic Mary Poppins is "really a dream come true."

"It's a role I've loved since a kid. I'm just making sure I'm not mimicking any actions."

**It's a role I've loved since a kid. I'm just making sure I'm not mimicking any actions."**

Emma Bonin

James Mowat plays another lovable favourite, Mary Poppin's friend Bert.

"It's a physical role, he's very active," Mowat said. "Lots of dancing, constantly moving, but he's a great guy."

Expect to see some fancy moves from Mowat. He said tap dancing has been modified from the Broadway production and the cast has put in many hours of practice.

Mowat will sing some popular favourites from the movie, Let's Go Fly A Kite and Chim Chim Cheree.

"Make sure you come opening weekend because you'll want to come see it again," Bonin said. "If you're at the opening night there is a chance to meet the cast at the cast party after."

Opening night is Feb. 20 at 7:30 p.m. at Lakeshore Catholic High School auditorium. The show will have seven performances — also Feb. 21, 27 and 28 and March 4, 5 and 6. Tickets are \$20.

For tickets and more information visit [www.portcolbornewoperaandco-society.com](http://www.portcolbornewoperaandco-society.com) or call 905-834-7572.

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# A cold walk for the hungry, hurting and homeless

**FRANKI IKEMAN**  
Postmedia Network

Open Arms Mission will host its second annual Cold-est Night of the Year walk at the end of the month.

The walk held across Canada is hosted by and to benefit a local community-based charity.

"Coldest Night of the Year is a wonderful walk that is nationwide and it is to address the hungry, the hurting and the homeless across Canada," said Jeff Aitken, pastor and mission centre manager.

The walk will feature two-, five- and 10-kilometre-long courses. Aitken said the best part of the walk — or top of raising much-needed money — is that people walk alongside the clients of Open Arms Mission.

"It's also a place where they can actually rub elbows, understand their needs, understand what it's like,"

Aitken said. "It helps people to instead of having sympathy to now have a sense of empathy."

"It goes from a 'me' and 'them' to a 'we'."

The walk takes place Saturday, Feb. 20, and will start and finish at Welland Community Wellness Complex on Lincoln Street. Registration starts at 4 p.m., there will be an opening ceremony at 5 p.m., and the walk will begin at 5:15 p.m.

Aitken said people can register online, at Open Arms Mission or on the day of the event.

"Last year's numbers just shocked me and this year I think we're going to have that again," he said of a high turnout.

For more information and to register, visit [www.coldestnightoftheyear.org/location/welland](http://www.coldestnightoftheyear.org/location/welland).

franki.ikeman@sunmedia.ca



FRANKI IKEMAN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Open Arms Mission pastor and manager Jeff Aitken is preparing for a special winter night's walk.

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## NHS axes plan to sell extended care licence

**FRANKI IKEMAN**  
Postmedia Network

Niagara Health System has cancelled its plan to sell its licence to operate Welland Hospital's extended care unit.

NHS had been in discussions about the possible sale of the licence to operate the ECU beds with other not-for-profit long-term care operators.

"After various opportunities were examined by NHS, our board of directors approved a recommendation at a recent meeting to maintain the licence for the ECU beds," said a news release issued last Tuesday.

Suzanne Johnston said the idea to sell the licence pre-dates her time as NHS president, going back to early talks in 2010.

Some financial analysis was done in January and it was decided that NHS would continue to operate the 75 beds at Welland's ECU.

"We're excited about it. I think the staff felt very good to hear that they don't have to worry about that," Johnston said.

Welland Mayor Frank Campion said NHS's decision to continue to operate Welland's ECU is "fantastic."

"It is good news," Campion said. "This has been up in the air for several years now and it's been problematic for us."

Campion said Tuesday's announcement didn't come as a total surprise, saying the city had been in discussions with NHS and the hospital administration had been keeping the municipality



Welland hospital.  
POSTMEDIA NETWORK FILE PHOTO

fairly well informed.

"We've been pursuing a resolution to those beds for ... more than four years since it became an issue," Campion said.

Campion said he's appreciative of the commitment to keeping the beds in Welland, so that people in need of long-term care are able to stay within their community close to family.

"I appreciate them making the right decision to keep the beds instead of trying to raise money from those beds," he said. "It's huge for us because there's people in those beds right now and if they were to leave those people would be displaced."

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Twitter: @FrankIkeman

# 211 will point you in the right direction

MICHELLE ALLENBERG  
Postmedia Network

If you have a question but don't know who to ask, INCommunities will point you in the right direction.

The organization — formerly named Information Niagara — was created in 1974 to connect people with local services. The organization was formed due to a need for information about services including child care, mental health professionals and taxes.

Individuals would call its phone number or go to the location in Niagara Falls to access services — that location has since closed. The organization is now in St. Catharines.

In 2005, INCommunities acquired the right to use the phone number 211, so people could connect with community services faster.

"We had the same difficulties that other organizations had," said retired executive director Rosanna Thoms. "People had to know our number — it was a 10-digit number ... People were having the same difficulties finding us as they did with other organizations. So when 211 was designated it just made perfect sense." We had this easy to remember number."

Thoms worked for the organization for 37 years before retiring in December.

Thoms was trained to be a teacher, but started working for Information Niagara in 1978 because there were no teaching jobs available.

"For me it was the impact this organization made in people's lives. The self-gratification of going home every day knowing 'god I've helped 20 people today.' And people were so grateful, so even when teaching jobs opened up I thought, do I want to deal with other people's children? Or do I want to help people?"

"Sometimes life is complicated, we know that. For many people it is more complicated than for others. Those are the kind of people that tend to dial 211 because they have a whole series of questions," Thoms said.

Staff at the organization are trained to speak to people who have a problem and assess what that person needs. Staff will put them in the right direction by providing a couple options for the person to choose from.

Thoms said providing information to people became important to her. There was never a year when she didn't learn something new. She said there were always new programs, projects and technology to learn about or develop.

"The world was changing. When we started we collected information on recycled paper. Now we have to save trees I saw someone to computers," Thoms said.

The information was put in an orange book and distributed to other organizations. With the proliferation of computers it became easier for information to be shared and kept up to date.

In a day INCommunities receives about 125 calls. This fluctuates depending on the time of year. During elections or income tax time, Thoms said, calls increase.

Calls also spike during power outages and emergencies.

"It's in those moments ... when something is happening, we are the number to call. It's an emergency, said new executive director Tammy Dumas. "So people aren't calling 911 in non-emergency situations. They can call 211 in those cases."

INCommunities also run programs that provide people with interpreters, and volunteer connections which has an online database that people can find volunteer opportunities through.



MICHELLE ALLENBERG/POSTMEDIA NETWORK  
INCommunities executive director Tammy Dumas and former executive director Rosanna Thoms are pictured at the INCommunities office in St. Catharines.



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# Province to tackle PTSD in first responders



FRANKI IKEMAN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

From left, Scott Lawson, Joe Bilodeau and Brian Lofthouse at the Port Colborne fire department. The province will look into the effects of PTSD on first-responders.

**FRANKI IKEMAN**  
Postmedia Network

Port Colborne Fire and Emergency Services fire prevention officer Scott Lawson says it's important that people deal with stress related to traumatic incidents the same way they might deal with a bad call.

"If you deal with the cold right away, it doesn't become that infection, those sinus problems, you don't get pneumonia and all that other stuff," Lawson said. "It's no different than what we do with our debriefings (after a bad call)."

"If you can deal with it early, it shouldn't become a severe issue."

One of the severe issues is post-traumatic stress disor-

der (PTSD), an illness first responders are twice as likely to suffer from than the general population, the Ontario Ministry of Labour said in a news release.

The release was issued to announce new initiatives from the province to try to prevent PTSD among emergency responders.

"When we talk to experts about PTSD, they tell us that it's not curable, but once you have PTSD it's about management," Labour Minister Kevin Flynn said.

Flynn said most research suggests that PTSD is however, preventable. He said that the province's preventative strategy focuses around four pillars: a radio and digital campaign aimed at increasing awareness about PTSD and eliminating stigma; an annual leadership summit to highlight best practices; recognize leaders and monitor progress in dealing with PTSD; a free online toolkit and grants for research that supports the prevention of PTSD.

that often calls strike a personal nerve, making the likelihood of a personal reaction higher.

"It's very personal, especially in smaller communities," Bilodeau said. "I have had a number of calls where I've known the person very, very close."

"You know what the problem is with firefighting, is you watch it on TV. I mean they go into all these burning buildings and they can see for miles, they always walk out with the baby, they're all dirty on their face and everybody slaps each other on the back and you feel good," he said.

"Our job is nothing like what you see on tv," Lawson said.

Brian Lofthouse, Port Colborne fire chaplain, has worked on the regional CISM team for more than a decade. He said that a lot has changed in the way firefighters deal with their critical incident stress. He said 10 years ago he may have come for a meal after dealing a tragic incident and no one would take the help being offered, whereas now half of the team or more would.

"I believe that we're coming to a point where mental illness is being treated like a broken leg," Lofthouse said. "We're still not there, but we're coming closer and closer."

Brian Lofthouse, Port Colborne fire chaplain

He said the strategy not only gets information on PTSD to the public, but sends a message back to first responders.

"It also, I think, tells the first responders themselves that we care about them, that the people who they keep safe care about their safety as well," Flynn said.

Port Colborne firefighter Joe Bilodeau is part of a critical incidence stress management (CISM) team working to make sure that firefighters have an outlet to talk about work-related stressors.

Bilodeau said that working in a small community, such as Port Colborne, means

it's a shift in perception been seen across the province, Flynn said.

"They're starting to realize that mental health injuries, including PTSD, are just as debilitating as physical injuries," he said.

Flynn said this week's announcement is just part of a provincial plan to tackle PTSD, the next step being for him to bring a "comprehensive strategy" to Queen's Park for discussion.

"Hopefully, in the not too distant future we have the best and the most comprehensive strategy to deal with PTSD," Flynn said. "I'd really like to see the day where PTSD is a thing of the past."

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# Helping girls grow their power

**ELISABETH ZIMMERMANN**  
Special to Postmedia Network

**H**ave you ever visited the Canadian Women's Foundation website? I would encourage you to do so and when you do, look up the section on Facts about Girls in Canada.

I think you will be startled and probably at some level dismayed. When you do the facts about what girls as young as seven in Canada are having to cope with I am sure that you will say we need to do something about this.

I would strongly agree, girls are having to navigate negative messaging coming at them from multiple directions and often without the skills to know how to do so. If you ever get a chance, I would suggest you also look up a film called Sexy Inc. Our Children Under Influence which can be found on the National Film Board's website. This was a film done in co-ordination with YWCA Montreal. It will only further reinforce what you have read on the CWF website.

So now that you feel overwhelmed and maybe a little hopeless, I want to let you know about something we are doing at the YWCA Niagara Region. We believe that part of the solution is giving girls the tools they need to be able to look critically at the information barrage they have to live with. We recognize this is the reality and it will be some time before those changes, if it ever does. By giving girls more tools it will make it easier for them to be resilient and to less influenced by everything they are exposed to.

On Feb. 11 at the Merritton Lions Club in St. Catharines, the YWCA Niagara Region will be hosting its 10th annual Power of Being a Girl Conference. We anticipate we will have about 200 high school girls attending the conference.

**Elisabeth  
Zimmermann**

this year. Each year, this conference is an opportunity to help girls build the skills they need to better navigate the minefields they encounter as they are growing up.

This year, we will be hosting Brele Mankoski and she will be delivering her workshop titled "Letting the Skin You're In." According to Brele, victimisation is the highest form of self-abuse, and calls out the sexism that girls face in the media of which an increasing number are young girls. Through the workshop, she will inspire the girls to look beyond the negative messaging they receive, to find their voices, and question the world around them.

The Power of Being a Girl Conference is one of the ways that we work with kids all year round to help them have a better understanding of how to have a healthier view of themselves, understand what healthy relationships look like, and give them some tools and skills that will help them to navigate the world we live in.

I hope that you will take the time to look up what I have suggested and learn more about it. Our kids are our most precious resource and we need to make sure they grow up in a world that allows them to be all that they can be. We all have the power to influence the world around us and my hope is that I will have inspired you to start to have a conversation about these very important issues.

Elisabeth Zimmermann is executive director of YWCA Niagara Region and past chairwoman of the Niagara Poverty Reduction Network.



# Poverty costly to Niagara

**DON FRASER**  
Postmedia Network

Poverty is a devastating and costly problem in Niagara.

Its effects are legion — crimes of necessity, poor health, homelessness, mental illness, isolation from society, family disruption and more.

At a Niagara Social Justice Forum held at Brock University Saturday, a presentation highlighted the desperate value of Niagara poverty and the value of a basic income guarantee.

The seminar by Niagara Poverty Reduction Network and Basic Income Guarantee Working Group stressed that income guarantee trials have proven it can dramatically reduce poverty, improve a society's functioning and is generally not a work disincentive.

It also came on the heels of Niagara Region council throwing its support behind a call for a guaranteed basic income.

On Thursday, councillors voted in favour of a motion calling on provincial and federal governments to work towards developing a guaranteed income, adding their support to a motion approved by the City of Kingston in December.

Glen Walker and Willy Noiles of the poverty network led the forum by underscoring the depth of poverty's reach in Niagara.

"Is there poverty in Niagara?" said Walker, who is chair of the network

## Region supports basic income guarantee

**ALLEN BENNER**  
Postmedia Network

While several regional councillors had concerns about throwing their support behind a call for a guaranteed basic income, the majority couldn't wait to support it.

Following a presentation from Niagara Poverty Reduction Network representatives at Thursday's regional council meeting, councillors voted against a recommendation to refer the discussion to the committee level for a review, and instead opted to work on a formal motion to be presented to provincial and federal governments to work towards developing a guaranteed basic income — adding their support to a motion approved by the City of Kingston in December.

During her presentation, NPRN representative Rhonda Barron discussed a "strong and compelling rationale for supporting the need for a basic income guarantee."

"This is the direct result of economic policies — the availability of good stable paying jobs is in short supply," she said. "We know that working is no longer a pathway out of poverty, when working full time at minimum wage means that you are still living below the poverty line."

and executive director of Positive Living Niagara. "The answer is yes, it's definitely here."

Among 2013 statistics revealed were the fact that 67,000 shelter beds are occupied here each year — 13 per cent by children.

In the region, 11,035 people are waiting for affordable housing in a group that includes families, single adults and couples and seniors.

The consequences of poverty cost Niagara \$1.38 billion a year, a semiannual group was told.

"Poverty is complex with interlocking causes and effects," said Noiles. "And we know we must address income to end poverty."

Supposing poverty is a plethora of issues that include a lack of affordable transportation and accommodation, insufficient government supports, precarious employment situations, and unaddressed health issues, he said.

Pushing you further into it can be disruptive family events, a job loss, poor education or personal troubles.

"We know poverty is (also) a draft on hope," Noiles said. "It is our collective problem."

Rhonda Barron of the basic income working group laid out the case for an income guarantee — one supported by evidence in trials and pilot projects. The concept is not a new one, she said, citing variants such as the Canada Child Tax Benefit and Old Age Security

pension and the Guaranteed Income Supplement.

"If we were to implement a guaranteed income that (also) doesn't result in complete dismantling of the social safety net," said Barron, who is also a health promoter with Bridges Community Health Centre in south Niagara.

It has been found in Canadian and other studies, that the plans do not dissuade work. Another British study showed money is not misused by purchases of alcohol and drugs.

Its many benefits include improved overall health, stronger families, fewer hospital and doctor visits and less savings on taxes.

One form of it is a negative income tax, whereby anyone below a low-income threshold pays no tax and a tax grant ensures everyone is brought up to a low-income threshold.

A tax scheme can also create further work-income incentives.

At least 250 people gathered for the ninth annual forum titled Building Solidarities and hosted by Brock's masters program in social justice and equity studies and the Social Justice Research Institute. Other sessions covered subjects that included First



DON FRASER / POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Glen Walker of Niagara Poverty Reduction Network is pictured at the Niagara Social Justice Forum held Saturday at Brock University.

Nations advocacy, connecting the environmental movement and other social justice struggles.

Carissa Taylor, an event co-organizer, said the forum "reflects a desire to do progressive work and involve

the community by bringing them on to campus in a way that built [these] relationships."

"And it's just grown every year."

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# School unveils statue of Harriet Tubman

DON FRASER  
Postmedia Network

**Freedom.**  
It's a word that resonates with Rochelle Bush, and one epitomized by a supremely brave woman.

Emancipation from the chains of slavery, and to live a life without bondage.

For Bush, the fact "she was adamant about having her freedom" was the essence of Harriet Tubman.

"Not only for herself, her family and others who were enslaved," said Bush, a trustee and historian at the British Methodist Episcopal Church on Geneva Street in St. Catharines. "She had personally seen it."

"And she was extremely selfless." Tubman died penniless and broke, because everything she did went to others. She had strength of character, selflessness, and my God she was a fighter."

Bush said Tubman never had a lot of money, but her friends in Auburn, N.Y., provided a home for her that she later bequeathed to her church.

Tubman was on the minds of many with February being Black History Month and with the unveiling on Tuesday of a statue in her likeness at her new namesake school in midtown St. Catharines.

The former St. Catharines resident is a hero, especially to black North Americans, as a leader of the Underground Railroad movement.

Many of her slave-freeing missions that started from the southern United States ended up in Niagara, which lived in St. Catharines from 1842 to 1861.

Tubman is an historical giant, of world status.

A BME Church website tribute to her notes in 1999 the A&E network asked prominent scientists, historians, theologians and others to compile a list of the 100 most influential people of the last millennium. Tubman was the only one recognized solely for anti-slavery work.

"Heralded as a military genius, freedom fighter and a spiritual leader, she who suffered from epileptic seizures, (she) could neither read nor write," the site notes.

Tubman was born Araminta Ross around 1822 on a Maryland plantation, where like so many other slaves she suffered abuse and injury.

She freed herself in 1849 and used the railroad network



JULIE JACKMAN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Ada Summers, Harriet Tubman School principal Ronna Lockyer, Rochelle Bush and Donna Ford at BME Church on Geneva Street.

— a euphemism for the private citizens who risked their own safety to help slaves elude the authorities — to escape to Philadelphia.

This secret resistance movement was aided by abolitionists and used coded words and signals in their infiltration to help slave runaways make their way to freedom.

The website notes that eventually, Tubman made her way to Canada in Canada West, or Ontario, of British North America and a place that abolished slavery in 1834.

She made her first trip to Niagara with 11 freedom seekers in 1851, with the Salem Chapel of the BME Church on Geneva Street her place of worship.

While here, she helped escaped slaves on their way to friendlier northern areas.

Rented and operated a boarding house on North Street

and also helped establish the Foreign Society in St. Catharines.

She was married twice,

and had an adopted daughter.

For Bush, it's important to recognize Tubman's deep-seated Christianity "and how she understood that even in this Protestant world, there were two separate Jesuses, and that still rings true today."

"There was the southern Jesus who kept us enslaved, and the northern Jesus who said we should be free," said Bush, who first learned of Tubman at Sunday School.

Tubman's life turned to another path later in her life. In 1862, she was recruited to join the Union Army in the American Civil War, where she provided help and nursing care to black soldiers and liberated African-Americans. She also spied and scouted Confederate lines and liber-

ated hundreds held in bondage.

She settled in Auburn, N.Y., after the war. There, she was active as a suffragist and humanitarian. She died in that town March 10, 1913, and her house is preserved still as a tourist site.

"What a courageous, remarkable woman she was," said Ada Summers, a BME Church treasurer and trustee of the charities. "Myself, women today, couldn't do what she did."

"We couldn't make all those trips back and forth and bring all those people to freedom and manage to survive along the way."

Another BME church with links to Tubman and the black journey to freedom is in Niagara Falls and this year turns 180 years old.

Falls church treasurer Wilma Morrison said black women in general have done much healing, inspiring, and Canadian black history is a rich source of pride and enduring community.

She recounts tour groups that come to her church, where she'll point to a male in the group. She'll tell him how much she admires the person. "But at the same time, I always emphasize the fact that there's nothing like a strong black woman."

"And that's one of the reasons we've been able to get past all this (history of being sold off)," said Morrison. Niagara Falls residents widely recognized and honoured her for her work in documenting and promoting black history in Canada.

Among others, she has received the Lieutenant-Governor's Ontario Heritage Award and was named to the Order of Ontario. At the BME



A life-sized statue of iconic freedom fighter Harriet Tubman was unveiled at her namesake St. Catharines school Tuesday, created by former artists Frank Rekrut and Laura Thompson.

## SCHOOL HONOURS ITS UNDERGROUND RAILROAD CONDUCTOR

On Tuesday, students in St. Catharines officially welcomed Harriet Tubman to her namesake school.

A life-size statue of the iconic freedom fighter was unveiled. It was created by former Niagara artists Frank Rekrut and Laura Thompson.

The bronze statue features a seated Tubman with a book in her lap, according to the District School Board of Niagara in a release. Although Tubman couldn't read, there are stories of her pretending to read to avoid capture.

Frank Rekrut, who now lives in Florence, Italy, has a special link to Tubman. In 2010, he donated a portrait bust of Tubman to the British Methodist Episcopal church on Geneva Street.

He became interested in working with the school board when he learned the school would be named for Tubman.

To finance the cost of the statue and transportation, the DSB launched the Bringing Harriet Home campaign. People, schools and organizations all contributed.

## BLACK HISTORY MONTH GALA

The African Association of Niagara is hosting its annual Black History Month Gala on Feb. 19 at Club Roma, 125 Vanisle Rd. in St. Catharines.

The event, with the theme Are We There Yet?, explores the collective journey of the African diaspora in North America and highlights some of the achievements of people of African descent in Canada.

It's a dinner/gala that includes traditional African music, poetry, spoken word and speeches and a performance by a celebrated Hollywood (Nigerian cinema) comedian flown from Africa.

# Artist remembered for steel sculptures

**ALLAN BENNER**

Postmedia Network

Rod Dowling, whose stainless steel sculptures grace Welland's canal bank, died earlier this month at the age of 87.

"We were very saddened to hear that he has passed away," said Welland Mayor Frank Campion, expressing sympathy on behalf of the city to his family and friends.

"He was a very interesting artist."

Campion said the sculptures Dowling created "really is the heart of Welland because they're made of stainless steel."

The sculptures were initially displayed in various locations near the recreational canal and Welland Civic Square, but in 2013 Rod Dowling Sculpture Park was created when three of the works of art — *The Knot*, *Listeners* and *The Aqueduct* — were relocated to a site beside Welland Community Wellness Complex along the banks of the recreational canal.

Campion said Welland has been known for generations as a city that produced stainless steel, particularly at the Atlas Specialty Steels plant and currently at the ASW plant. And he said it's appropriate to note that manufacturing legacy celebrated



PHOTOS BY ALLAN BENNER/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Welland is home to 11 of Rod Dowling's stainless steel sculptures, including three at the Rod Dowling Sculpture Park. The artist died last week.

through the "very interesting sculptures that now help beautify the city."

"We're happy to have them on our properties," Campion said.

Welland regional Coun. Paul Gagner, a city councilor when Dowling donated the sculptures.

"It was an easy decision to agree to take them and put them along the canal trail," Gagner said.

It gave a local artist an opportunity to showcase their work, "and hopefully create that type of public art."

While Dowling's sculptures have also been displayed in Toronto, St. Catharines, Thorold and at Artpark in Lewiston, N.Y., most of his work can be seen on display at Safari

Niagara in Stevensville.

Rod Dowling was born in Tasmania in 1928, and later lived in Melbourne, Australia, where he was a competitive runner, a long-distance swimmer and a cyclist. He moved to Canada in 1953, where he became a pilot and scuba diver.

Dowling died Feb. 1 at St. Catharines hospital, with Joan, his wife of 60 years, and eldest daughter by his side. In his obituary, Dowling was described as "creative, inquisitive, energetic, gregarious, mischievous" with a "youthful exuberance that never left him."

allan.benner@postmedia.ca  
Twitter: @benner1



The Aqueduct by Rod Dowling is one of 11 sculptures the artist donated to the city.



Two of Rod Dowling's sculptures displayed near the city's waterfront.

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NOTICE: UNCLAIMED BUILDING DEPOSITS  
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Pursuant to Section 4.2.5 of By-Law 6023/1291 of the City of Port Colborne, all unclaimed building deposits from building permits issued in 2008 and prior will be transferred to the general funds of the municipality after ninety (90) days from the date of issue. All unclaimed deposits must be within ninety (90) days from January 15, 2016. The process to claim a building deposit will be detailed in a register located at the last location of the permit holder and a statement of the respective permit numbers will be made available on the City's website www.portcolborne.ca and in local news media. For more information please contact the City of Port Colborne at 905-635-2900 ext. 261 or by email at [permits@portcolborne.ca](mailto:permits@portcolborne.ca).

If you require any additional information please contact Lyne Mertz, Chief Building Officer at 905-635-2900 ext. 261 or by email at [permits@portcolborne.ca](mailto:permits@portcolborne.ca).

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### Public Notices

### NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING Proposed Lot Maintenance By-law and User Fees

TAKE NOTICE that the Council of the Corporation of the City of Port Colborne will hold a public meeting on the 22nd day of February, 2016, at 6:30 P.M. in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 68 Charlotte Street, Port Colborne, Ontario, L2A 1C2 under a proposed Lot Maintenance By-law and User Fees.

**PUBLIC PURPOSE AND EFFECT:** The proposed By-law is being created to deal with refuse, debris and junk on private property and that those properties are maintained in a clean and clear condition. The proposed By-law will regulate the use of land, trees, structures, procedures, notices, as well as establishing rules for the use of land.

ANY PERSON may submit written comments prior to the meeting or attend the public meeting and make verbal representation of the fine of the meeting.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION is contained in Council Report No. 2016-14, "Proposed Lot Maintenance By-law" available on the City's website at [www.portcolborne.ca](http://www.portcolborne.ca) or during regular office hours from the Clerk's Division at City Hall.

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### Obituaries

JOLIVET, Betty (Gero) - Of Port Colborne passed away peacefully 4 days after her 71st birthday at the Hamilton General Hospital on February 1st. Reunited with her loving husband Louis (2012), her parents Frank & Ada Gens and brother John. She was predeceased by her son Robert, Cheryl and Lucy grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Much loved by her sister Barb Gero, brothers Frank (Vlola) Joe (Gindy & Emery, sisters-in-law Linda AuCoin and many special nieces and nephews. Lovingly remembered by her life long friend Donna Hale and special nephews Matthew & her loving companion Buddy her cat. Mom retired from Bick's Pickle Smokers 7 years ago & lived life to the fullest. She was always up to new adventures; Nashville, Ottawa, and many day trips. Her favorite treat were to sit on Grandpa's lap and play the slot machine. Many stories have been told about her "lemon" as she called it. Mom will always be remembered for her loving heart, warm hugs and funny wit. Her children would like to thank the staff of the Welland Hospital, Dr. Cybulsky, Dr. Owners & staff of the ICU West hospital, all the nurses at General Hospital, for their compassion and special care of their mother. Many thanks go to the Park Precise House, Hamilton for their assistance at our time of need. A private family memorial has already been held. A tree will be planted in her memory by her husband's memorial bench at H.H. Knoll Park. Private donations in memory can be made at any CIBC, Intrust #06572/ account#6108897 in lieu of flowers.

### Obituaries

**LABROSSE, Rhéal** - It is with saddened hearts that the family of Rhéal Labrosse announce his passing at Douglas H. Rapieffe Lodge on January 30, 2016, in his 89th year. Beloved husband of the late Delta (Lebelé). Loving father to Pierrette (Manoel), Lamont and Richard (Carole). Grandfather of 10 grandchildren, including siblings Rhéal, Alford, Rhéal Labrosse was born in Papineauville, Québec; moved to Welland in 1942 where he was a member of the business community for many years. Rhéal together with his wife Delta received the Citizenship Award for volunteer work within the Port Colborne/Welland community. Rhéal was an active member in the Chevaliers de Colomb council #2826 and will be sadly missed by many. Special heartfelt thanks go to the Rhéal family, especially to the caring staff at Rapieffe Lodge. In lieu of flowers, Rhéal's wishes, cremation has taken place and a private Family Memorial will be held at a later date. If desired, donations to Douglas H. Rapieffe Lodge or the Welland Funeral Home 827 East Main Street, Welland (905)735-1863, or online. For online condolences please go to: [www.wellandfuneralhome.com](http://www.wellandfuneralhome.com)

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